

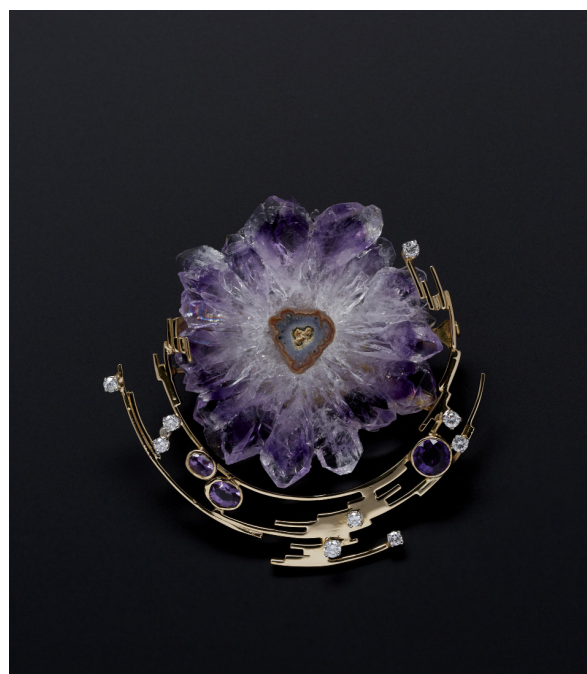


L'ÉCOLE, School of Jewelry Arts  
presents  
**JEAN VENDOME,**  
JEWELRY ARTIST

Exhibition from September 30 to December 18, 2020



Jean Vendome, *5th Avenue Ring*, white gold and diamonds, 1966 - Photo Benjamin Chelly



Jean Vendome, *Rosace Brooch-Pendant*, yellow gold, diamonds, amethyst flower slice, and round and oval amethysts - Photo Benjamin Chelly

### **Jean Vendome, a Pioneer in Creative Jewelry**

Jean Vendome, whose real name was Ohan Tuhdarian, created his first jewelry collection in 1950, and worked tirelessly right up until his death in 2017. His multifaceted talent combined eccentric and surrealist elements with contemporary graphic design, giving his jewels a refined and intricately designed appearance.

The pieces he crafted during his seventy-two years of intensive work demonstrated the art of enhancing fine stones by combining them with precious materials, using a highly accomplished jewelry-making technique. Nonetheless, he always observed his own personal rule: to show the stones without betraying them. He was a pioneer of modern jewelry, and his uniquely creative approach placed his work somewhere between gem art and high jewelry.

He broke away from the traditional focus on stone quality – it was the beauty of the pieces that formed the very essence of his work, and gave it such a unique signature, a dreamlike touch of fantasy that elicits emotion and imagination; a manifested desire to capture the beauty of nature by making it eternal and forever new.

This is why he always chose “phantom” stones, such as rutilated quartz or lapis lazuli, whose mysterious inclusions gave the piece extra soul. For him, the value of the stone mattered little. Whether it was a diamond, a geode, a fossil or a pebble, nothing was more important to this artist and esthete than creating a strange form of beauty – as Baudelaire said, “the beautiful is always bizarre”.

Jean Vendome was a pioneer of modern jewelry. As both a full-blown work of art and a small sculpture to be worn, he gave immense expressive value to his work. His primary goal was to transform the jewel in order to change how it is worn and to make it playful and creative, so that parts of a necklace and a bracelet could also be worn as part of a ring or brooch.



Jean Vendome, *Le Dormeur* Necklace,  
silver, crab claws and garnets, 1991 -  
Photo Benjamin Chelly

In the pursuit of new shapes, he combined raw crystal settings and sculptures with geodes, indulging his passion for mineralogy which he shared with his friend, the writer Roger Caillois. The shapes and sizes of these minerals reflected his taste for eccentric and flamboyant forms that catch the eye and the light – they are themselves journeys and worlds to explore. The contrast between straight and jagged, smooth and rough, lines and curves, precious and raw, creates something amazing that touches us physically. The chromatic richness of his palette, with fluctuations between warm and cold colors, enhanced his innate understanding of the material. By juxtaposing all these elements like a vast mosaic of otherworldly memories, he creates abstract, metaphysical, and poetic compositions never before seen in jewelry-making, which evoke the four elements: earth, water, air, and fire.

### **The “Jean Vendome, Jewelry Artist” Exhibition**

From September 30 to December 18, L'ÉCOLE, School of Jewelry Arts will bring to light the universe of this adventurous creator, who, as a true artist, set about creating his own world. He bucked fashion trends with his own personal and pioneering style, which means that his pieces have personality, but are also visually balanced owing to their proportionality with the golden ratio. Simple yet sophisticated, powerful yet intricate, eccentric yet well-designed, constructed and deconstructed, Jean Vendome's jewelry is emotional and never rational. In order to be appreciated fully, it must be loved and understood, as it is the jewelry that chooses the wearer.



The private collections on display will emphasize the visionary side of his creations. One hundred and thirty pieces will be on show, including Aléna Caillois' wonderful necklace. The retrospective will also feature pieces from public collections at institutions including the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, as well as the sword of the academician Roger Caillois, on special loan from the Musée des Confluences in Lyon.

The exhibition will showcase a wide range of his pieces. Visitors will be able to retrace his innovative exploration of shapes and his avant-garde approach to changing scale and traditions in order to adapt his jewelry for the modern and liberated women of the 1970s. Jean Vendome's prolific creations resonate like a poetic and meaningful echo of the major artistic movements of the second half of the 20th century. From kinetic pop art to the dream of the Apollo 13 space mission, his jewelry pieces evolved into *Constellations*, *Aurore Boréale* and *Espace* during the 1970s. The geometric shapes of the skyscrapers in *Les Tours* betray his passion for urban architecture and the race upwards. The 1980s were the years of "imaginary walks", where he played on the mimetic analogy of agates, fragments of eternity, and matte and polished gold jewels with "phantom" quartz, rutilated quartz and dendritic agate. The 1990s are marked by the use of ever stronger colors, which Jean Vendome called his "vagrant" or "wild" colors. It was a time of escapism and dreaming.

A sculptor in search of fascinating inclusions, radiance, materials and colors, Jean Vendome, alchemist and jeweler, will never cease to amaze you.

### Specialist Curator

**Sophie Lefèvre** is the specialist curator for the exhibition. She has been the head of communications at the Center for Research and Restoration of Museums of France (C2RMF) since 2014. A restorer of graphic artwork and an art historian by training, she organizes conferences on the conservation of graphic and photographic documents. She has also taken part in several exhibitions of paintings from the beginning of the 20th century at various museums, including an exhibition on 1920s realism that took place in 1998 at the Musée-Galerie de la Seita in Paris, where she was the co-curator. She is the author of the monograph *Jean Vendome, Artiste-joaillier*, published during the "Jean Vendome" exhibition at the Lyon Natural History Museum (Somogy Éditions d'Art, 2000)

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Free admission / Tuesday-Saturday / 12pm-7pm

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